

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS  
TYLER DIVISION**

**THE DAILY WIRE, LLC;**

**FDRLST MEDIA, LLC; and**

**THE STATE OF TEXAS, by and through its  
Attorney General, Ken Paxton,**

*Plaintiffs,*

**v.**

**DEPARTMENT OF STATE;**

**GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT CENTER;**

**ANTONY BLINKEN, in his official capacity as  
Secretary of State;**

**LEAH BRAY, in her official capacity as Deputy  
Coordinator of the State Department's Global  
Engagement Center;**

**JAMES P. RUBIN, in his official capacity as  
Coordinator for the Global Engagement Center of the  
State Department;**

**DANIEL KIMMAGE, in his official capacity as the  
Principal Deputy Coordinator for the Global  
Engagement Center at the State Department;**

**ALEXIS FRISBIE, in her official capacity as Senior  
Technical Advisor of the Technology Engagement  
Team for the Global Engagement Center at the State  
Department;**

**PATRICIA WATTS, in her official capacity as the  
Director of the Technology Engagement Team at the  
Global Engagement Center at the State Department,**

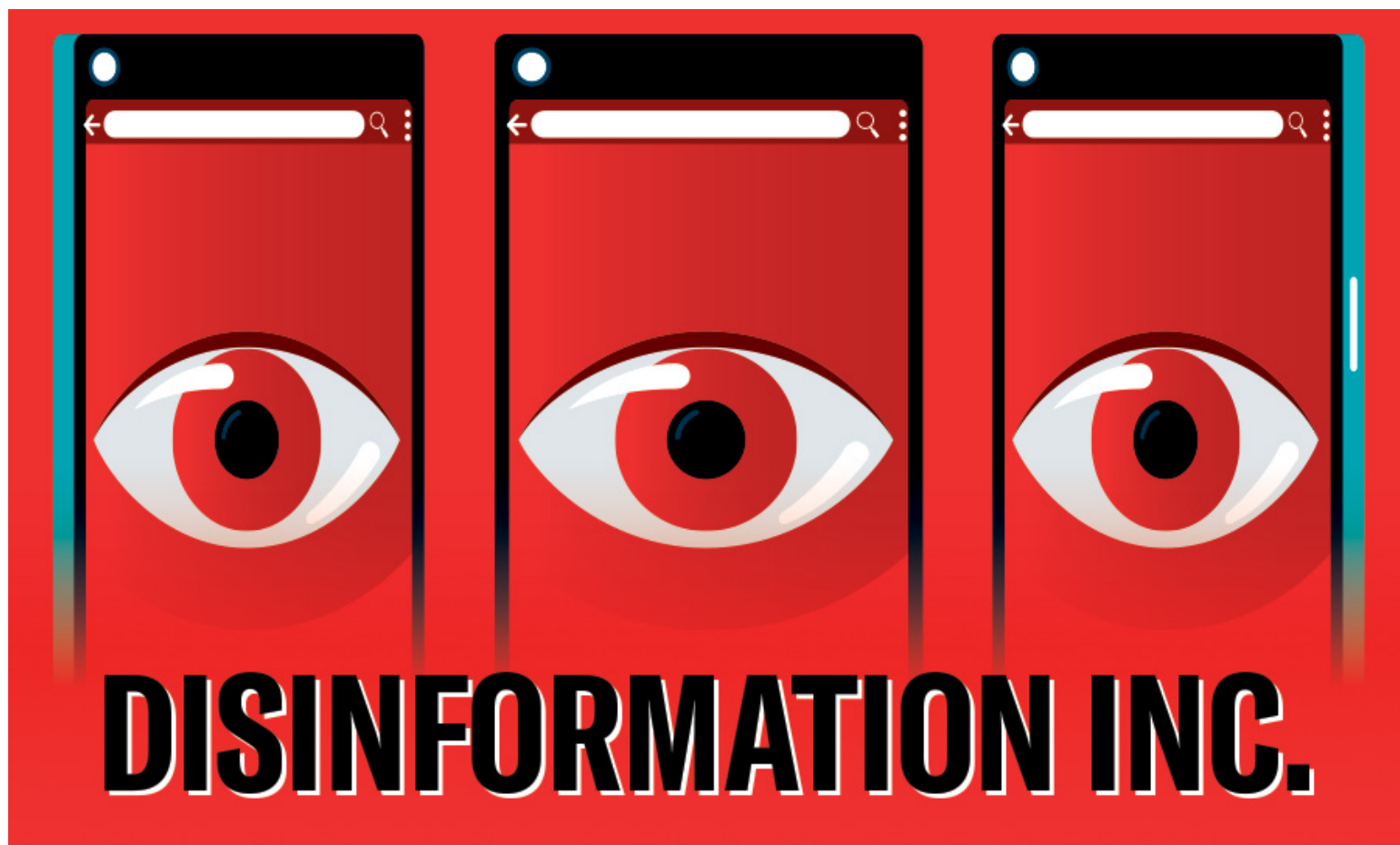
*Defendants.*

**Civil Action No.: 6:23-cv-00609**

**EXHIBIT 4**

## ‘Disinformation’ tracker paid state-funded university \$90,000 for conservative blacklist report

☐ Available at: [washingtonexaminer.com/news/1538205/disinformation-tracker-paid-state-funded-university-90000-for-conservative-blacklist-report/](https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/1538205/disinformation-tracker-paid-state-funded-university-90000-for-conservative-blacklist-report/)



**EXCLUSIVE —** The State Department-funded Global Disinformation Index paid the University of Texas at Austin to conduct research for a heavily scrutinized report that took aim at conservative media outlets, documents show.

GDI has come under scrutiny from Republican lawmakers and watchdogs following multiple *Washington Examiner* reports starting in February on its covert operation of feeding conservative website blacklists to advertisers with the intent of shutting down disfavored speech. The self-styled British “disinformation” tracker steered \$90,810 to UT-Austin’s Global Disinformation Lab for a December 2022 report that alleged the “riskiest” websites were the *New York Post*, the *Blaze*, *RealClearPolitics*, and other conservative websites, according to contracts obtained by the *Washington Examiner*.

“We must never compromise on the First Amendment,” Republican Texas state House member Brian Harrison told the *Washington Examiner*. “I am far more concerned about governmental arbiters of ‘misinformation’ than misinformation itself. Taxpayer-funded academic institutions must not be allowed to

help censor free speech or push liberal ideology, and I'll be demanding explanations from the University of Texas."

The revelation of how much money GDI paid the state-funded lab, which it also trained for the project, comes after the *Federalist* published internal messages last week showing how university personnel worried in 2022 they would come under the spotlight amid GDI being widely slammed by conservative news outlets.

The State Department and a nonprofit group that it funds called the National Endowment for Democracy granted roughly \$960,000 between 2020 and 2022 to GDI — which has resulted in GOP members of Congress, including House Oversight and Accountability Committee Chairman James Comer (R-KY), launching investigations. The NED has since announced it won't grant any more money to GDI, while the State Department has defended its grant.

"GDI funded the full cost of UT's involvement," UT's Global Disinformation Lab told the *Washington Examiner*. "No state money was used."

The letter of agreement, which includes GDI's logo at the top, was addressed to Sally Dickerson, whom UT Austin lists on its website as its disinformation lab manager. It stipulated that the project would begin on June 13, 2022, and end on Oct. 28 of that year.

"As part of extending the risk ratings to other countries, the GDI seeks a local partner organisation or institution (such as you) to compile a media list — based on the national media market and put together with a local partner/country reviewer — and conduct research on a selection of news domains applying a set of questions and data fields to determine each of the domain's disinformation risk," the agreement, which noted that at least nine people should be employed for the project, stated.

A separate budget document obtained by the *Washington Examiner* shows that GDI's project costs were \$90,810. Dickerson received \$1,922, and \$974 was paid to Kiril Avramov, co-director of the disinformation lab, records show.

Meanwhile, the bulk of payments went to undergraduates and graduate students for 12 weeks. Their names were redacted by UT-Austin in documents provided to the *Washington Examiner* under the Freedom of Information Act.

"It has long been obvious that the term 'disinformation' is a club used to beat conservative media," Parker Thayer, an investigative researcher at the Capital Research Center think tank, told the *Washington Examiner*. "State-funded organizations ought to have nothing to do with promoting the claims of 'disinformation' of 'experts,' particularly the Global Disinformation Index, which has a painfully obvious bias against conservatives."

Employees at UT-Austin's disinformation lab went into an apparent state of paranoia after the *Washington Examiner* published a February report on GDI, according to newly obtained records, with Dickerson messaging her colleagues, "So do we think anything will come back to us?"

The message, and others that were previously reported on, provide a window into how UT-Austin feared that criticism of GDI could lead to the university facing pressure from conservatives. Microsoft announced in February that it was suspending its relationship with the disinformation group pending an internal review, though the corporation has stonewalled on providing details about its findings.

The major software company Oracle, on the other hand, said in late April that it was severing its ties to GDI over “free speech” concerns, the *Washington Examiner* reported. GDI’s two affiliated American nonprofit groups were hit in early May with IRS complaints from the National Legal and Policy Center, a conservative watchdog, which alleged that the entities were violating federal law by redacting their 2021 financial disclosure forms.

“It is hypocritical that a group whose mission is to censor conservative media for alleged ‘disinformation’ is itself guilty of hiding its funding sources and redacting the names of its officers from public view,” Paul Kamenar, counsel to the watchdog, said at the time.

Protect the Public’s Trust, another right-leaning watchdog, filed a lawsuit in early May against the State Department in an attempt to uncover records in connection to its prior GDI funding.

GDI did not return a request for comment.